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ABSTRACT

Creating learning environments and learning experiences for students has always been at the heart of student affairs work. This document is intended to provide guidelines, titled "Principles of Good Practice," as to how student affairs can advance student learning, and it serves as a framework to aid student affairs in meeting challenges encountered within their institutions without sacrificing the individuality of their institutions. The Principles are not rules, but means to conducting learning-oriented student affairs work, based on extensive research about the impact of college on educational outcomes. The Principles outlined are as follows: (1) engage students in active learning; (2) help students develop coherent values and ethical standards; (3) set and communicate high expectations for student learning; (4) use systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance; (5) use resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals; (6) forge educational partnerships that advance student learning; and (7) build supportive and inclusive communities. For each Principle there is an inventory of items that pertain to that Principle. The inventory items address policies, practices, institutional culture, norms, and expectations that support good practice in student affairs administration. The inventories are designed to help student affairs professionals examine their individual and institutional mission, goals, policies, and practices to determine their level of consistency with the Principles of Good Practice. (EMS)

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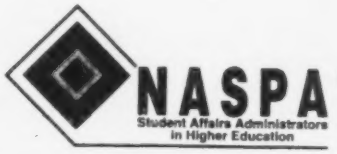
PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

STATEMENT AND INVENTORIES



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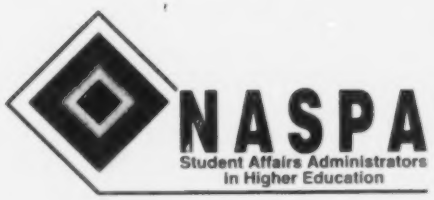

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) is the preeminent, comprehensive student affairs organization where administrators, faculty and graduate students have an equal voice in governance. Serving the student affairs profession since 1924, ACPA's programs, publications and services are renowned for their focus on student learning, research, current issues and trends in higher education.

NASPA, the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy, and practice, addresses critical issues in student affairs and seeks to enrich the educational experience for all students. As a national association, NASPA promotes leadership in higher education, advocates for students, and provides cutting edge tools and programs to higher education practitioners.

"PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE"

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February 1998

Dear ACPA and NASPA Members,

Enclosed is a document entitled "Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs". This document has been in development for the past two years and was originally shared at our joint convention in Chicago in March, 1997. The principles were developed by a joint task force of NASPA and ACPA members chaired by Elizabeth Whitt and Greg Blimling.

Since the distribution of the initial draft last March, revisions have been made and an inventory check list was developed by a second task force of NASPA and ACPA members that we convened and chaired. The principles and the inventories are designed to offer student affairs educators another tool to use in the creation of positive learning environments for our students.

We view the inventories as dynamic, not static, and urge you to use them in their present form or in a modified form that best fits the student learning environment on your campus.

Best wishes for a rewarding and productive year.

Suzanne Gordon, Past President
NASPA

Paul M. Oliaro, Past President
ACPA

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

GOOD PRACTICE IN STUDENT AFFAIRS:

1. Engages students in active learning.
2. Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards.
3. Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning.
4. Uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance.
5. Uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals.
6. Forges educational partnerships that advance student learning.
7. Builds supportive and inclusive communities.

INTRODUCTION

Today's context for higher education presents student affairs with many challenges. Among these are new technologies, changing student demographics, demands for greater accountability, concern about the increasing cost of higher education, and criticism of the moral and ethical climate on campuses. Institutions of higher learning are also influenced by social and political issues, including multiculturalism, personal responsibility, and equal opportunity. Our response to these challenges will shape our role in higher education. The choice of student affairs educators is simple: We can pursue a course that engages us in the central mission of our institutions or retreat to the margins in the hope that we will avoid the inconvenience of change.

Others in higher education have recognized these challenges and have responded with calls to concentrate "on the core function of the enterprise, that is, focusing on student learning" (Wingspread Group, 1993). Focusing on learning rather than instruction is a fundamental shift in perspective. If the purpose of education is learning, then institutional effectiveness should be measured by specific educational benefits and outcomes rather than by the number of computers, books, faculty, or the size of endowments.

Creating learning environments and learning experiences for students has always been at the heart of student affairs work. *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1994) asked us to embrace the current challenges as an opportunity to affirm our commitment to student learning and development. As a first step in that direction, the *Student Learning Imperative* articulated the need for an emphasis on student learning and the value of student affairs educators working collaboratively with students, faculty, academic administrators, and others. The next step is identifying practices that will move our profession forward in its focus on learning and guide us in meeting the challenges with which we are confronted. For this purpose, we have identified principles to guide the daily practice of student affairs work.

DEFINING PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

In 1986 in the wake of reports critical of undergraduate education, the Lilly Endowment and the Johnson Foundation sponsored an effort by higher education leaders to identify the most effective approaches to educating undergraduates. From this discussion, Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education: (1) student-faculty contact, (2) cooperation among students, (3) active learning, (4) prompt feedback, (5) time on task, (6) high expectations, and (7) respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. These principles established a concise statement of behaviors associated with high quality undergraduate education that practitioners, scholars, and the general public could understand and use.

Student affairs lacks a comparable statement of good practice. If we are to collaborate with others in higher education to advance student learning, we need clear and concise guidelines for how to proceed. This document — *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* — is intended to provide those guidelines. Some of the principles identified for good student affairs practice are similar to those proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). The two sets of principles share a commitment to student learning, but the primary audiences for each document and the scope of learning activities addressed are different.

CONTEXTS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTICE

Student Affairs Commitments and Values

To be meaningful, principles of good practice for student affairs should be consistent with our core values which have been documented throughout the literature of the profession. Since 1937 when the American Council on Education published the first *Student Personnel Point of View,* our field has produced many documents about student affairs work. These works span seven decades, examining student affairs from different perspectives and for different purposes. They demonstrate our long-standing belief that higher education has a responsibility to develop citizens capable of contributing to the betterment of society. These documents affirm our conviction that higher education has a duty to help students reach their full potential.

Our beliefs about higher education serve as the foundation for our commitment to the development of "the whole person"; our collective professional values are derived from that commitment. Values evident across the history of student affairs work include an acceptance and appreciation of individual differences; lifelong learning; education for effective citizenship; student responsibility; ongoing assessment of learning and performance (students' and our own); pluralism and multiculturalism; ethical and reflective student affairs practice; supporting and meeting the needs of students as individuals and in groups; and freedom of expression with civility. Any statement of principles of good practice for student affairs must be consistent with our profession's values and must help us meet our founding commitments.

The Importance of Context

Our history also reminds us that good student affairs practice must be considered within the context of issues that influence higher education and its missions. Societal concerns and needs, economic conditions, and external political agendas shape the parameters for student affairs work. These conditions emphasize the need for our practices to be informed by research and writing not only about teaching and learning but also concerning the most pressing issues confronting our students and their families.

Institutional contexts influence how principles for good practice are applied. Such contexts within higher education include institutional missions, expectations, and student demographics. In realizing institutional goals, each student affairs division is responsible for managing its resources effectively in support of its institution's mission. This document provides a framework to aid student affairs in meeting these challenges without sacrificing the individuality of their institutions.

USING THE PRINCIPLES

The *Principles of Good Practice* are not immutable rules, nor do we offer specific instructions for their use at particular institutions. The principles are means to conducting learning-oriented student affairs work, based on extensive research about the impact of college on educational outcomes. As such, they offer unambiguous, yet adaptable, guidelines for productive use of resources for learning.

The principles were written to be incorporated into everyday tasks and interactions with students, faculty, academic administrators, and others. They are intended to shape how we think about our responsibilities, communicate our purposes to others, and engage students. Using the principles as a one-time topic for staff orientation or setting them aside until a crisis occurs for which they might be useful serves little purpose. Rather, the principles should create a continual context for examining and implementing student affairs missions, policies, and programs. They should provide both a guide for assessing the contribution of student affairs to student learning outcomes and a curriculum for ongoing in-service education

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. *Good practice in student affairs engages students in active learning.*
   Active learning invites students to bring their life experiences into the learning process, reflect on their own and others' perspectives as they expand their viewpoints, and apply new understandings to their own lives. Good student affairs practice provides students with opportunities for experimentation through programs focused on engaging students in various learning experiences. These opportunities include experiential learning such as student government; collective decision making on educational issues; field-based learning such as internships; peer instruction; and structured group experiences such as community service, international study, and resident advising.

2. *Good practice in student affairs helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards.*

   Good student affairs practice provides opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and student affairs educators to demonstrate the values that define a learning community. Effective learning communities are committed to justice, honesty, equality, civility, freedom, dignity, and responsible citizenship. Such communities challenge students to develop meaningful values for a life of learning. Standards espoused by student affairs divisions should reflect the values that bind the campus community to its educational mission.

3. *Good practice in student affairs sets and communicates high expectations for learning.*

   Student learning is enhanced when expectations for student performance inside and outside the classroom are high, appropriate to students' abilities and aspirations, and consistent with the institution's mission and philosophy. Expectations should address the wide range of student behaviors associated with academic achievement, intellectual and psychosocial development, and individual and community responsibility. Good student affairs divisions systematically describe desired levels of performance to students as well as to practitioners and regularly assess whether their performances are consistent with institutional expectations.

4. *Good practice in student affairs uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance.*

   Good practice in student affairs occurs when student affairs educators ask, "What are students learning from our programs and services, and how can their learning be enhanced?" Knowledge of and ability to analyze research about students and their learning are critical components of good student affairs practice. Student affairs educators who are skilled in using assessment methods acquire high-quality information; effective application of this information to practice results in programs and change strategies which improve institutional and student achievement.

5. *Good practice in student affairs uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals.*

   Effective student affairs divisions are responsible stewards of their institutions' financial and human resources. They use principles of organizational planning to create and improve learning environments throughout the campus that emphasize institutions' desired educational outcomes for students. Because the most important resources for learning are human resources, good student affairs divisions involve professionals who can translate into practice guiding theories and research from areas such as human development, learning and cognition, communication, leadership, and program design and implementation.

6. *Good practice in student affairs forges educational partnerships that advance student learning.*

   Good student affairs practice initiates educational partnerships and develops structures that support collaboration. Partners for learning include students, faculty, academic administrators, staff, and others inside and outside the institution. Collaboration involves all aspects of the community in the development and implementation of institutional goals and reminds participants of their common commitment to students and their learning. Relationships forged across departments and divisions demonstrate a healthy institutional approach to learning by fostering inclusiveness, bringing multiple perspectives to bear on problems, and affirming shared educational values.

7. *Good practice in student affairs builds supportive and inclusive communities.*

   Student learning occurs best in communities that value diversity, promote social responsibility, encourage discussion and debate, recognize accomplishments, and foster a sense of belonging among their members. Good student affairs practice cultivates supportive environments by encouraging connections between students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners. This interweaving of students' academic, interpersonal, and developmental experiences is a critical institutional role for student affairs.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs is intended to guide student affairs practice. The principles are grounded in the research on college students, experiences with effective educational institutions, and the historical commitment of student affairs to students and their learning. Ongoing discussions and research on the principles will further develop our understanding of good practice in student affairs. These principles should not limit or restrain other proven means to enrich the education of students. They are intended not as an end in themselves, but as a means to our common goal: achieving the educational missions of our institutions by focusing on student learning.

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INVENTORIES FOR USE WITH THE "PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS"

For each principle presented below is an inventory of items that pertain to that principle. These inventories are designed to help student affairs professionals examine their individual and institutional mission, goals, policies and practices to determine their level of consistency with the identified Principles of Good Practice. Each Inventory can be used to assist student affairs professionals and other members of the campus community to review current activities and to identify new initiatives they might wish to pursue.

An inventory accompanies each of the seven principles: Active Learning, Value and Ethical Standards, High Expectations, Systematic Inquiry, Effective Utilization of Resources, Educational Partnerships, and Supportive and Inclusive Communities. The inventory items that correspond with each principle address policies, practices, institutional culture, norms and expectations that support good practice in student affairs administration. Each inventory can be useful to all campus staff and faculty members who are interested in providing quality services to students and promoting student learning.

The inventories were created to enhance and improve student affairs activities on campuses, not to evaluate current practices. These are to be used as a method of awareness and insight to create opportunities for "program" development, offer ideas or support current activities. Each inventory will be best used as a basis for interpretation and improvement of current methods, not as a basis for judgment about performance, summative evaluation or self-justification.

INVENTORY 1

1. Good practice in student affairs engages students in active learning.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. The mission and goals for out-of-classroom activities are stated as learning outcomes.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Student affairs educators communicate to students the intended educational outcomes associated with specific programs.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Student affairs educators provide students with leadership training and offer leadership opportunities.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Collaboration with faculty is promoted to integrate civic responsibility and service into the curriculum.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Students routinely evaluate programs and activities in which they participate.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Student affairs educators use a variety of communication methods to engage students' different learning styles.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Students are expected to understand and respect other students' experiences and perspectives.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Student affairs educators are evaluated, in part, on their abilities to link student learning outcomes with divisional programs, activities, or services.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Opportunities for experiential learning are available and publicized to students.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 2

2. Good practice in student affairs helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. The division's mission statement, policies, and practices are consistent with the values of the institution.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Student affairs educators teach and model respect for shared community values.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Learning communities are provided which foster discussion of values and ethical standards.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Campus publications reflect the values and ethical standards of the institution.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. The code of student conduct and judicial process reflect the core values of the division and institution.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Faculty and students are included in developing the processes for adjudicating student misconduct.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Students are taught to respect freedom of speech, and to express their views with civility.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Opportunities are provided for students to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Student affairs educators are accountable for behaving in a manner consistent with standards of professional ethics.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 3

3. Good practice in student affairs sets and communicates high expectations for learning.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. Students are informed that the institution has high expectations for their academic and personal achievements and active involvement in campus life.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Students are informed that student learning includes the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills to promote and assist critical thinking.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Students are encouraged to participate in activities that increase self-understanding and self-confidence.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Programs are offered that address student needs for academic support, co-curricular involvement, and personal growth.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. The institution recognizes outstanding student accomplishments through rewards, honorary organizations, and other forms of public recognition.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Faculty and student affairs educators are rewarded for outstanding work which improves the quality of student life.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. A record of student accomplishments and involvement in meaningful educational activities outside of the classroom is maintained.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 4

4. Good practice in student affairs uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. Student affairs educators are actively engaged in research to assess student learning outcomes.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. The division's research and evaluation plans measure student satisfaction, needs, and outcomes.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Research data are used to help student affairs educators understand what students are learning and to improve programs and services.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Research priorities of the student affairs division are included in the institutional research agenda.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Research results and their implications are communicated on a regular basis to faculty, staff, and students.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Student affairs educators are knowledgeable about the literature of their profession and apply its theories and practices.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Staff development programs are offered to assist staff in understanding and applying current research and practice to enhance student learning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Staff are active in professional associations and present research findings both on and off the campus.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 5

5. Good practice in student affairs uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. Adequate fiscal resources are allocated to support the division's student learning mission and outcomes.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. A strategic plan exists that links fiscal and human resources to desired educational outcomes.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. A systematic evaluation process is used to ensure that programs and services are cost effective.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Student needs are assessed on a regular basis and resources are allocated accordingly.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Resources are secured to incorporate new technologies into programs and activities.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Staff development experiences are routinely provided to enhance knowledge of assessment, organizational development, fiscal resource management and program planning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Educational outcomes are used to determine the design and use of indoor and outdoor learning spaces.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. The division recruits, hires, and trains student affairs educators who are knowledgeable about learning theory and human development.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Efforts are made to ensure prudent expenditures of student funds by student organizations and their leaders.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 6

6. Good practice in student affairs forges educational partnerships that advance student learning.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. Collaborative efforts between and among students, student affairs staff, and other divisions in the university are encouraged.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Student affairs educators work with others outside of the division to develop joint programs that increase student learning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Faculty, students and student affairs educators collaborate to link academic programs with out-of-classroom learning experiences.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Students are included on appropriate institutional decision-making bodies.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Student affairs educators ensure that student needs are considered when developing institutional policies and practices.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Student affairs educators participate on institution-wide committees whose focus is the welfare of the institution.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Student affairs educators work with external organizations to enhance student learning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Partnerships have been built with community and business organizations that advance service learning, leadership development, technological support, or responsible citizenship.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

INVENTORY 7

7. Good practice in student affairs builds supportive and inclusive communities.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know Does Not Apply
1. Student affairs educators work with diverse groups of students, faculty, and staff to promote a just and civil campus climate.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Inclusiveness is modeled by staff and promoted in programs and services.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Student affairs educators meet regularly with different student groups to ensure their needs are known when conducting divisional and institution-wide planning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Division policies and hiring practices promote diversity and encourage appreciation of individual differences.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Faculty and administrative staff from other divisions are routinely invited to student affairs staff meetings to discuss campus issues and program planning.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Staff and students are provided programs and training opportunities to assist them in understanding and promoting inclusiveness.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Learning opportunities are provided that promote open discussion of diversity issues.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Student affairs educators participate in the development of programs that welcome new members of the community to the institution (i.e., new student orientation, transfer student orientation).	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Students are consulted on campus issues that affect them.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. Student affairs educators help to facilitate the rituals and traditions of the campus culture as a way of celebrating the institution's community's purpose and mission.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 1996 Paul Oliaro, President of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and Suzanne Gordon, President of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), initiated a joint association effort to draft *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs.* This final document is the result of the efforts of two groups of dedicated professionals, who developed the core content of the document, and numerous professional colleagues from around the country who aided in the revision and fine tuning of their work.

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